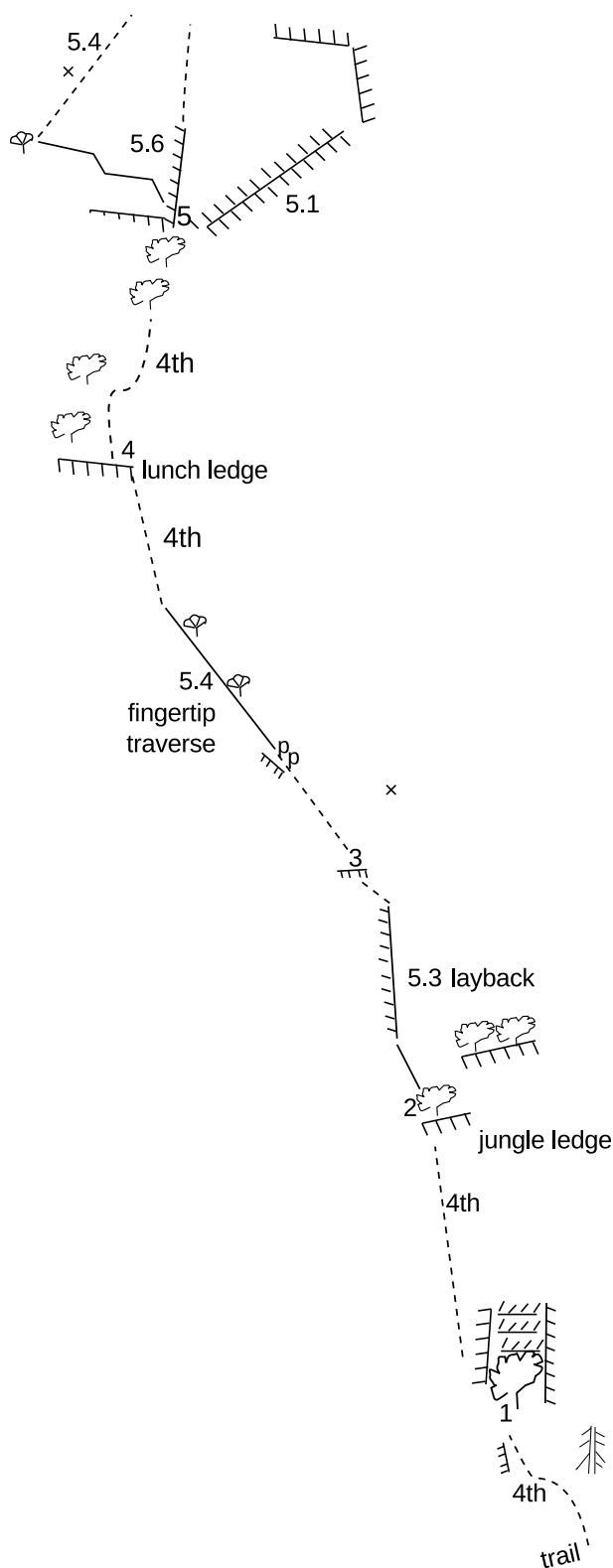


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Fingertip Traverse (5.4)



An easy Tahquitz classic, this was the original climb used to define 5.1 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale. Most of the climbing is 4th or easy 5th class, but the namesake traverse is more like 5.4 by modern standards. Hike up to Lunch Rock and then head to the right along the trail. The first pitch starts directly from the trail, near a truncated tree, with the first belay easily visible. Pro to 2". FA 1936, Jim Smith, Bob Brinton, Arthur Johnson, and William Rice.

P1. Scramble up to a large double oak tree in an alcove, the infamous "ant tree." Anchor at the lower part of the tree to avoid stirring up the ants. 30 m, 4th class.

P2. Move up the left side of the alcove's left wall, where it is shortest, stemming against the opposite wall and then against two branches of the upper tree. Avoid the main trunk to keep from stirring up the ants. Protect with a 0.3" cam (blue C4) in a small finger crack before moving onto the rock. (This can also be done by climbing higher up the tree, or by climbing the broken overhang at the back of the alcove. These options can be protected with a 2" cam in the crack in the left corner.) Continue up easy terrain. 30 m, 4th and easy 5th class except for the committing move out of the tree.

P3. Climb a right-facing dihedral with good protection and stances. Near the top of the dihedral, a short section requires laybacking (5.3). Belay at a tiny ledge on a slab (small gear). 30 m

P4. Go around a corner and traverse along a finger-width crack, smearing on the sloping face below, 5.4. Protect using the trees and gear 1-2" and smaller. Continue up 4th-class terrain to Lunch Ledge (gear belay or natural anchor). Here the route joins up with Angel's Fright. 40 m

P5. Climb up from the middle of the ledge. (Linking P5 and P6 will give unacceptable rope drag unless you plan carefully.) 4th class.

P6. Move up and left on a flake and then tiptoe along it as it continues around a corner. This is easily protected with cams. (Do not follow the ramp lower down.) At a small tree, head up a 5.4 slab with an orange bolt.

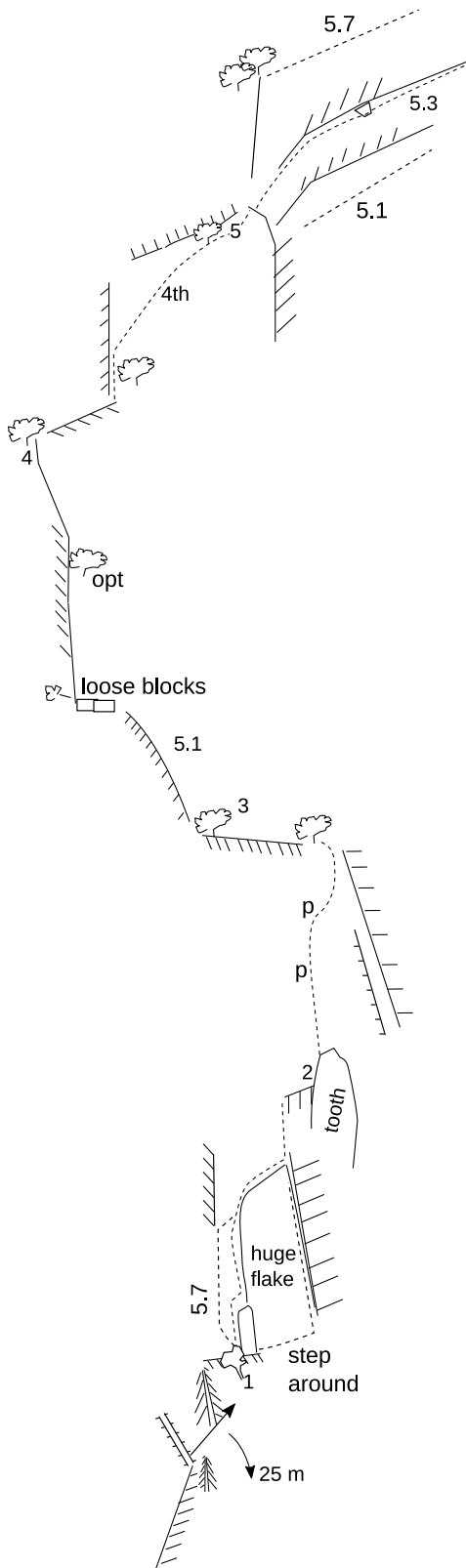
Var 1: Head right into a 5.1 gully, then turn left at an overhang.

Var 2: Climb a very thin finger crack, punctuated with pin scars. 5.6

Walk uphill to the standard friction descent.

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

White Maiden's Walkway (5.4)



A Tahquitz classic. Difficult routefinding. The route ends not far below the summit of Tahquitz and is one of the longer routes on the rock. Start from the left side of the Maiden Butte, which can be approached either from the North Side Trail or the Lunch Rock Trail. Pro to 3", or 4" for var 2 of P2.

P1. The obvious way up is a gully with pine trees in it. Scramble up class 4 rock to a belay at a dihedral. The first move is difficult; step left first using a hidden fingertip hold for balance, then mantle up into the crack. After the first pine tree, enter a gutter heading up and to the left, but then immediately exit the gutter to the right to avoid getting the rope snagged in brush. Continue past a big pine tree and belay near a pair of small trees. 5.0 except for the first move

P2. Traverse to the right, over a saddle behind a boulder, and make an exposed step around with friction into a gutter. Protect with a #3 TCU. (It may be possible to bypass the friction move by downclimbing slightly, but I haven't tried it.) Head up the 5.0 gutter and watch for an exit to a large saddle on the right. A common mistake is to overshoot the saddle instead of exiting.

Var 1: A clean hand and foot crack just left of the small deciduous tree. 5.7

Var 2: A ragged fist- and off-width crack heading straight up from the small deciduous tree. 5.6

P3. From the center of the saddle, head straight up toward a small tree. Near the second fixed pin, you run out of easy ways up, the only apparent option being a very difficult mantling move up to a small sloper hold. Grope for a series of excellent holds that allow you to easily move up and to the right. Come back to the tree. Place gear to route the rope so as to avoid damaging the tree by dragging the rope over it. Continue left across the ledge to a belay at another tree. 5.4, 35 meters

P4. Climb 15 meters up a flake. As the flake levels out and disappears, look for a large, loose conch-shaped block close enough on the left to reach out and touch. Step across two loose blocks and make a committing step around a corner to a stemming stance, then reach for a tree. Head up a 5.0 gully. Optional belay at any of several spots with trees or gear anchor possibilities – or continue to a large tree.

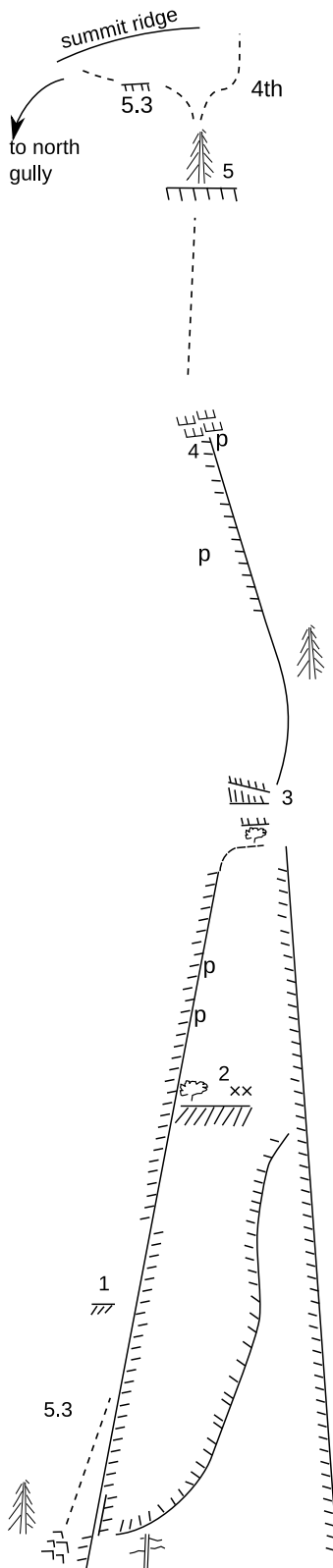
P5. Traverse right toward another tree, but head upward before it. Gear belay in a one-inch vertical crack before the big gully. 4th class.

P6. For the standard 5.3 finish, head up and out of the gully onto a ledge with a claustrophobic overhang. At a large block, detour to escape the overhang. Move all the way out to the rightmost side of the block. Get your right foot up on a small step-stool, side-pull on a hold, and mantle up onto the block.

Either go down to the friction descent or go up and over the summit and come down the north gully.

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

Northeast Face, East Variation (5.6)



This climb is in the middle of the northeast face, to the left of the Larks and to the right of El Grandote. A prominent inverted “Y” is formed by right-facing dihedrals, and this variation heads up its left fork. Approach via the North Side Trail. The “Y” is difficult to see through the trees from the trail, but the north face lies below the prominent gendarme at the top of the Larks, and this climb is on the left side of that face. A fun route that is easily protected and can be climbed on a Saturday morning without being in a conga line. A possible negative is that there is a certain sameness to a lot of the climbing on pitches 2-4. Sustained 5.5-5.6 climbing on pitches 2 through 5. Pro to 3”, with a 4” cam repeatedly coming in handy.

P1. Climb flakes to the left of the dihedral, enter the left-facing part of the dihedral briefly, and belay at a small ledge. Ignore the bolts to the right, which are for the slab climb Grace Slick. 60 m, 5.3.

P2. Continue up the crack. Insert into the main right-facing part of the dihedral and climb a wide (knee jam) crack. End at a bolted anchor on a huge ledge. 5.5

P3. Continue up the dihedral, toeing in to a thin crack at the corner, to a series of overlaps at the crotch of the “Y.” Traverse past a small tree, then move up through 5.6 broken terrain to a belay. The crux of the climb is at the end of this pitch and the beginning of the next one. Vogel and Gaines describe a variation that swings around farther to the right, but I’ve heard it’s harder. Higher up is an alternative belay at a tree around a corner to the right, but this is a poor choice due to rope drag.

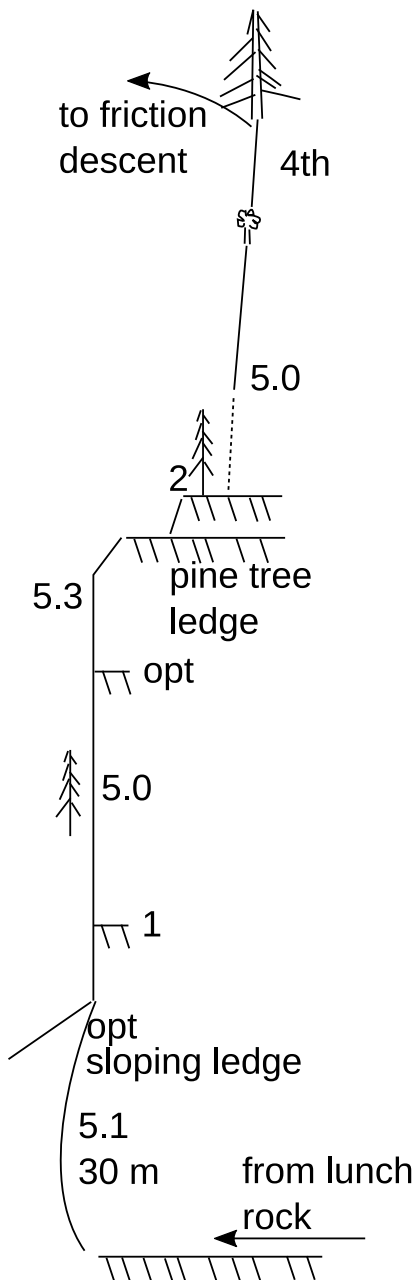
P4. Head up the stem of the “Y” toward overhangs. Stay in the dihedral, and don’t be lured off route by the fixed piton above and to the left. Belay as close as possible to the overhangs in order to complete the following pitch with a 60 meter rope. A fixed pin can be backed up with 3” or 4” cams.

P5. Pull through gaps in a set of steep blocks and irregular overhangs. The moves are strenuous but easily protected, with big holds. After this the climbing gets much easier for the rest of the route. Head for a shady belay at a pine tree on a big ledge. 60 m

P6. Continue to the right up 4th class terrain to the summit ridge, or traverse a delicate 5.3 ledge to the left for more direct insertion into the north gully.

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

The Trough (5.3)



This climb was the original definition of 5.0 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale, but is now considered about 5.3. 3-5 pitches. Gear to 3", slings for trees. Singles of cams are enough.

Approach: From the bottom end of the parking area at Humber Park, take the Ernie Maxwell trail and then turn left at the signpost for the climber's trail. Climb to Lunch Rock. Continue past Lunch Rock to the foot of Tahquitz Rock. Turn left, and crawl up through a tunnel behind a tree. Follow the ledge until it ends.

P1. Follow a crack up and around a corner to the left. Fingers and friction initially, then off-width. Pass through a large, sloping, triangular ledge and insert into the obvious trough. Belay at a small ledge on the right. 45 m

P2. Continue up the trough. Near the top is more difficult climbing including smearing and squeezing through a narrow gap. At the top, the trough steepens and ends. Move up and over to the right here, onto Pine Tree Ledge. 45 m.

P4. Climb a face a couple of feet to the right of the pine tree, aiming for the small oak tree that is visible against the sky. It's difficult to find gear placements here that aren't cracks behind flakes, but it is possible to sling a series of tiny trees. The slope moderates and turns into a gully. Beyond the oak tree is a short section of easy climbing which ends at a huge pine tree. 55 meters, 5.0 and 4th.

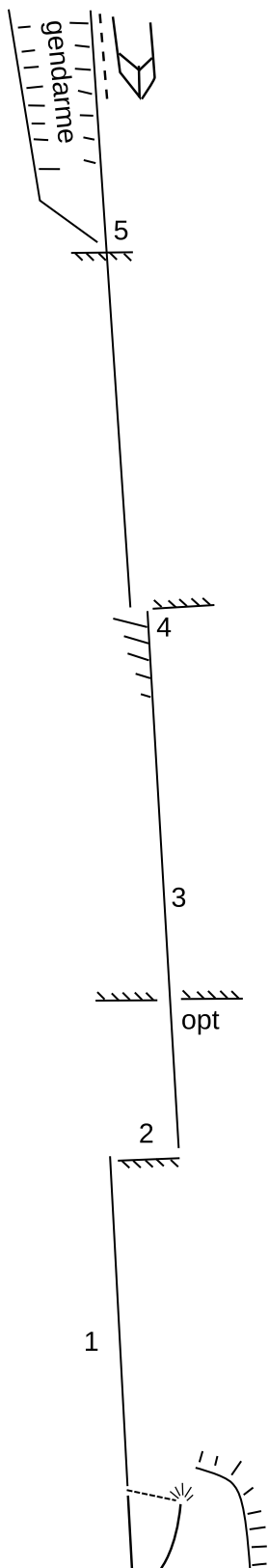
- From the pine tree, climb up class 2 slab to the left, staying on the crest of the ridge to avoid exposure and steeper slopes. About 60 meters from the pine tree, you reach an area of boulders and bushes (before the summit).

- The standard friction descent route (class 3) is on the south side of Tahquitz Rock. Descend a chimney behind a house-sized boulder. Zigzag down a series of ledges, then head for a double tree. Traverse slabs to get to the trail.

- Return on the climber's trail, staying close to the foot of the rock except to avoid the slabs near the bottom of the Ski Tracks area.

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

West Lark (5.4)



A low-angle ascent up an obvious crack, with straightforward routefinding. A fall might mean hitting a ledge. The few harder moves are protectable. Comfy belays are scarce, so when you see one, use it. Pro to 2". Singles of cams should be enough for most leaders.

The start lies at the extreme right side of the north face, just to the left of the north buttress. Approach via the North Side Trail, leaving the trail to approach the base of the climb by threading your way between talus piles. The gendarme near the top is the most visible landmark through the treetops.

To find the beginning of the climb, get up close and look for the obvious easy start in a recess, with the bush and short friction traverse shown in the topo. Nearby to the right is difficult or impossible climbing consisting of a left-facing dihedral ending in an overhang.

P1. Climb past an inconvenient bush and left a few feet across slab. (A direct start, to the left, is probably also possible, but I haven't tried it.) Insert into a crack and head up. ~ 35 m

P2. Continue up the crack to a ledge on the right. ~ 30 m

P3. Continue up through a gap in an overhang and belay above it. It is possible to belay below the overhang instead, but then it becomes difficult to do the next two pitches with a 60-meter rope. ~ 30 m

P4. Continue to a hanging belay next to a right-facing dihedral. The belay needs to be right near the overhang if P5 is to be possible with a 60-meter rope. 50 m

P5. Up to a ledge below a huge gendarme. 60 m

P6. Continue straight up, on the right side of the gendarme. Pass between the gendarme and its little sister, a rock shaped like the prow of a ship. Face and chimney climbing to the top.

Var 1: It is also possible to go to the left of the gendarme. Rope drag may be a problem, and the crux move may be difficult to protect without depending on bad rock.

Gain the summit ridge and head down left into the north gully descent route, or insert into the gully more directly by scrambling.

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz